

Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)

SPAW was adopted in Kingston, Jamaica, by the member governments of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Environment Programme on January 18, 1990. It entered into force on June 18, 2000, after ratification by its ninth Contracting Party. It is one of three Protocols to the Cartagena Convention--the other two deal with cooperation to combat oil spills, adopted in 1983, and land-based marine pollution, adopted in 1999. The SPAW Protocol preceded other international environmental agreements in utilizing an ecosystem approach to conservation. It acts as a vehicle to assist with regional implementation of the broader and more demanding global Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The Cartagena Convention is the only legally binding environmental treaty for the wider Caribbean area. The Convention and its Protocols constitute a legal commitment by the participating governments to protect, develop and manage their common waters individually or jointly. UNEP provides the Secretariat in Kingston for the Convention and its Protocols.

The stated objectives of the SPAW program are:

- To significantly increase the number of and improve the management of national protected areas and species in the region, including the development of biosphere reserves, where appropriate;
- To develop a strong regional capability for the coordination of information exchange, training and technical assistance in support of national biodiversity conservation efforts;
- To develop specific regional, as well as national management plans developed for endangered, threatened or vulnerable species such as sea turtles, the West Indian manatee, black coral and migratory birds;
- To coordinate the development and implementation of the Regional Program for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean, in keeping with the mandate of the SPAW Protocol;
- To coordinate activities with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as other biodiversity-related treaties, such as the CITES, Ramsar, Bonn, and Western Hemisphere Conventions.

The Parties to the SPAW Protocol are the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Grenada, Guyana, Netherlands, Panama, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Venezuela. On September 5, 2002, the United States Senate, with reservations, an understanding, and a declaration, gave its advice and consent to the ratification of the Protocol.

The eighth meeting of the SPAW Parties is expected to be convened late in 2014.

Website address: <http://www.cep.unep.org/cartagena-convention>

Recent Developments:

The 6th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the SPAW Protocol and the 8th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the SPAW Protocol were convened 11-12 December 2014, in Cartagena, Colombia. The meetings reported on accomplishments in areas of interest of the United States, such as marine mammal and sea turtle conservation, marine protected area management, developing guidance for presenting exemptions to listed species and response to the invasion of lionfish in the Wider Caribbean Region.

By far the most contentious issue of the meetings was the addition of 10 new species to the SPAW Protocol's annexes of protected species over U.S. objections, leading to the first ever vote in Cartagena Convention history. The SPAW Protocol contains three annexes of flora and fauna that Parties commit to protecting. Those annexes had not been altered since the adoption of the Protocol in 1990. The Protocol calls for Parties to nominate species and for the nominations to be accompanied by supporting scientific and technical information. A working group was

established to review species that might be appropriate for listing. After some discussion, Colombia proposed that 4 species from the list be listed in Annex II and 4 species be listed in Annex III. The United States objected, citing the lack of supporting documentation and the fact that no Party had formally submitted a proposal for any of the species. In compliance with the Treaty, the United States entered a reservation to the listing of all 10 species, delivered to the government of Colombia, the depository government on 3 March 2015.

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